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January 9, 1962

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McGEORGE BUNDT
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Assessment of Current
Soviet Intentions in
the Berlin Crisis

Enclosed is a paper prepared in the Department
which I think will be of particular interest to you.

The Special Eyes Only Supplement has received
extremely limited distribution in the Department
corresponding to that received by the Eyes Only
telegram on this subject.

S/ Mr. Mangin
J. R. Spetie

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Bureau of Intelligence and Research

Research Memorandum

RPM 3.16, January 4, 1962

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SOVIET INTENTIONS IN THE BERLIN CRISIS

December 28 - January 3

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Harassment: The January 2 conversation between Ambassador Thompson and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko indicated no basic change from the Soviet negotiating position on Berlin and Germany expounded in earlier talks (Rusk-Gromyko) and official speeches. The Soviet Foreign Minister did express willingness to resume discussions at any time suitable to both parties.

The sending of New Year's greetings to East Germany from the rest of the bloc conspicuously avoided any passage linking the issue of a peace treaty with a 1962 or any other deadline. Ulbricht, on the other hand stated in his greeting to the GDR populace that conclusion of a treaty contained a "task of supreme importance and urgency in 1962."

Reports stemming from Soviet diplomatic sources hinted at the existence of a timetable for the operational guidance of Soviet representatives abroad. According to the reports, Moscow allegedly expected a Four-Power meeting on the Berlin question to be convened during January or February. If, however, agreement for such a conference could not be reached, the USSR would itself convene a peace conference during the first half of March, inviting all states which had participated in the war against Germany. The conference purportedly would ignore completely the question of an occupation status in West Berlin, leaving this issue to be resolved exclusively by the Allies vis-a-vis East Germany once a peace treaty was signed.

Other Soviet diplomatic channels reported consideration being given in Moscow to the idea of prolonging discussions on Berlin indefinitely, somewhat in the nature of the disarmament talks.

Military Preparations and Demonstrations. No changes in the bloc military posture related to Berlin and Germany have been reported in the past week.

Harassment of the US Military Mission in East Germany apparently ceased after the first week in December, following the initiation of counter-harassment tactics against the Soviet military missions in West Germany.

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Berlin and Germany. Despite a series of rumors that GDR authorities intended to impose visa and custom controls on all foreigners at the Berlin sector border during the holiday season, no changes in access procedure or interference with access were reported during the past week.

US protests concerning the barring of General Watson from East Berlin unless the civilian officials accompanying him submitted to GDR identification controls elicited no satisfactory response from the Soviet authorities. In retaliation, the US sector officials barred the Soviet commandant and his political adviser from entering West Berlin through the American sector.

Both Soviet and East German media renewed charges of FRG provocative action in West Berlin, citing in particular plans of various FRG Bundestag (parliament) groups to meet in Berlin during January. An East German railroad official also reiterated earlier accusations of vandalism and sabotage in GDR installations in West Berlin.

Additional reports of the arrival or pending arrival of foreign workers in at least three industrial areas of East Germany appeared through various channels. In two instances the workers were identified as Russians.

In an article in Pravda (December 30) outlining and justifying the course of developments in East Germany, Ulbricht cited for the Soviet public a figure of 30 billion marks as the estimated cost to the GDR economy of the refugee exodus. He also stressed the role played by the Soviet army in the establishment and support of the East German state, emphasizing the advice and assistance given by army officers — "Soviet communists" at that time in military uniform. Other Ulbricht pronouncements over the New Year's holidays also referred to the economic tasks facing the GDR and the necessity of a bloc role in strengthening the GDR against Western "economic troublemakers." The GDR greetings to the USSR made a point of the "establishment of close economic union with the Soviet Union."

ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET INTENTIONS

The course of the Thompson-Cromyko conversations indicated the USSR was, for the moment at least, interested in continuing diplomatic discussions and in maintaining an atmosphere conducive to further soundings. The evident Soviet interest in continuing the talks would imply the USSR does not intend to embark on major moves relating to Germany until some further diplomatic proings have taken place in Moscow.

The various reports of Soviet timetables and alternate plans of action would appear to reflect Soviet planning for varying contingencies. The reported March deadlines in particular do not necessarily imply a Soviet commitment to act, but probably encompass plans and preparations (diplomatic, military, etc.) to be completed at a certain time which would enhance the USSR's freedom of maneuver during the period in question.

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The various recent East German pronouncements, and particularly the Ulbricht Pravda article, may well reflect GDR concern with the course of Soviet policy toward Germany and represent attempts to pressure the USSR to a GDR-favored line. Ulbricht's specific references to the role played by the Red Army in the establishment of the GDR appears to be at variance with Khrushchev's oft-repeated thesis that communism cannot be imposed by arms and in any event touches upon a subject rarely mentioned in public by East German communists. Ulbricht may have intended to underscore the USSR's responsibility for the future of its own creation, conceivably to counter those in Moscow who may be advocating a lessened Soviet commitment in East Germany.

In this connection, Ulbricht's references to economic problems and the cost of the refugees to the GDR economy could foreshadow large-scale Soviet or bloc economic assistance to East Germany or GDR pressure for such assistance. In any event, Ulbricht's justification of the communist course of action in East Germany would seem to reflect the existence of a certain amount of questioning within the USSR as to basic reasons behind the refugee exodus and the consequent need for the wall.

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Special Supplement to Research Memorandum RFR 3.16; dated January 4, 1962

ANALYSIS OF THOMPSON-GROMYKO TALK, JANUARY 2, 1962

Gromyko reiterated the general lines of the now-standard Soviet "submaximum" position calling for a separate four-power agreement on West Berlin which the USSR would subsequently incorporate in a separate treaty with the GDR. The agreement would provide for a change in West Berlin's status, guarantee free access, and "respect for GDR sovereignty" (a formula subject to many interpretations and exploitations). The GDR would assume "obligations" under the four-power agreement, but the form of the GDR's association with the agreement was left unclear. The agreement, Gromyko stated, should not be concluded in "isolation" from agreements on other, unspecified, issues.

As was to be expected, Gromyko insisted on the need to change the status of West Berlin and sought to create the impression, without being categorical, that this was a precondition for an agreement on access. However, he apparently did not specifically call for the abrogation of occupation rights in West Berlin.

It was evident from the course and the tone of the discussion that Gromyko was not adverse — or did not wish to appear adverse — to giving serious consideration to any "reasonable" Western proposals. In particular, he evinced a surprising amount of interest in the suggested international authority for the Berlin access routes, surprising considering that he conveyed this interest intentionally or otherwise during the first round of discussions. Gromyko also conceded that the USSR in principle considered it possible to reach an agreement on freedom of access to Berlin.

It would appear, however, that Gromyko's negotiating tactics were directed at least as much toward insuring a mere continuation of the talks as toward developing a substantive base for possible agreement. He linked his reference to the possibility of an access agreement to simultaneous agreement on other points "in which the USSR was interested," but refused to spell out the latter. (This response also was an obvious counter move to Ambassador Thompson's insistence that the nature of the access agreement obtainable would determine whether questions other than access could be negotiable.) Gromyko also introduced the broader concept of European security into the discussion (noting pointedly that Secretary Rusk himself had raised the issue.) Soviet spokesmen in the past have repeatedly contended that the introduction of European security matters into negotiations on Berlin and Germany was a Western device to sidetrack the talks or prolong them indefinitely.

In sum, Gromyko provided no firm indications as to the future course of the Soviet negotiating line. While indicating a willingness to consider

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such proposals as the international access authority, he did not stray significantly from the standard Soviet position. However, the line of his argumentation indicates that the USSR:

- (a) is definitely interested in prolonging the talks;
- (b) intends to strive to broaden the substantive base;
- (c) is likely to produce in the near future a counter plan in some form linking the international access authority with a formal change in the status in West Berlin which without being specific about it will in effect alter the occupation status; and
- (d) failing agreement here, may venture in the broad range of European security arrangements.

For the time being, however, it would appear Gromyko intends first to probe how firm Western commitment to the present occupation status in West Berlin will remain. The future course of Soviet negotiating tactics will then probably proceed from that estimate.

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